

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LISBON 01398 131928Z

65-61

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

----- 036209

O R 131842Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2071

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1398

EXDIS

DEPT PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINT, PO

SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE COUP: ASSESSMENT AND IMPLICATIONS

REF: LISBON 1333 (NOTAL)

1. FAILURE OF MARCH 11 COUP WILL DISMEMBER THE EXTREME RIGHT AND SERIOUSLY WEAKEN THE MODERATE CENTER IN PORTUGAL. IT WAS MAINLY MILITARY ULTRAS WHO LAUNCHED THE ABORTIVE EFFORT, BUT RADICALS IN THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM) CAN BE EXPECTED TO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO REMOVE OR NEUTRALIZE MODERATE MILITARY OFFICERS FROM POSITIONS OF POWER. THIS IS BEGINNING TO HAPPEN WITH ANNOUNCEMENT OF ARREST OF SOME MODERATE SPINOLA SUPPORTERS (LISBON 1350).

2. NOBODY KNOWS YET HOW MUCH MORE POWER WILL ACCRUE TO THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LISBON 01398 131928Z

AFM RADICALS IN THE WAKE OF THIS LATEST RIGHTIST FIASCO. MY

JUDGEMENT IS THAT THE AFM RADICALS WILL SCORE MASSIVE, BUT HOPEFULLY NOT DECISIVE, GAINS. AT THE MINIMUM WE CAN EXPECT THE MILITARY TO ARROGATE GREATER POWERS TO ITSELF AND, WITHIN THE MILITARY, THESE POWERS WILL BE CENTERED IN THE AFM. THE PERSONAL POSITIONS OF OTELO AND VASCO GONCALVES HAVE PROBABLY BEEN MOST STRENGTHENED. BOTH ARE AT BEST SUSCEPTIBLE TO COMMUNIST INFLUENCE.

3. THE CIVILIAN POLITICAL PARTIES, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE COMMUNISTS, HAVE ALL BEEN WOUNDED, PERHAPS FATALLY. MOST PORTUGUESE MILITARY, REGARDLESS OF OTHER DIFFERENCES, HAVE BEEN UNEASY WITH THE COUNTRY'S NASCENT POLITICAL LIFE TO WHICH THEY WERE COMPLETELY UNACCUSTOMED.

(A) MAJOR CENTER-RIGHT PARTIES (CDS, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS) WILL PROBABLY BE FORMALLY BANNED BEFORE THE SCHEDULED APRIL 12 ELECTION. CENTER-LEFT POPULAR DEMOCRATS (PPD) ARE NOW BEING SMEARED AS "FASCIST" AND THEIR FUTURE IS UNCERTAIN. THAT WOULD LEAVE ONLY SOARES' SOCIALISTS AND THE COMMUNISTS, PLUS SOME MINOR PARTIES TO THE LEFT OF THE COMMUNISTS. WITH THIS SITUATION, CHANCES OF HOLDING MEANINGFUL ELECTIONS NEXT MONTH ARE SLIGHT, ALTHOUGH THE FORMAL PROCESS MAY STILL TAKE PLACE. PCP IS GLEEFULLY HOLDING LISBON RALLY TONIGHT TO ANNOUNCE THEIR CANDIDATES.

(B) THE POSITION OF THE SOCIALISTS IS NOW EXPECIALLY PRECARIOUS. WITH THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM NARROWING TO THE LEFT, EVEN THEY COULD BE CANDIDATES FOR THE "FASCIST" LABEL. THEY KNOW THIS AND ARE STRUGGLING TO AVOID THE STIGMA BY HOLDING DISCUSSIONS ON POSSIBLE COOPERATION WITH CUNHAL'S COMMUNISTS. THESE DISCUSSIONS, HOWEVER, ARE BOUND TO BE A DIALOGUE OF THE DEAF. MY CONVERSATION WITH SOARES (LISBON 1397) TENDS TO CONFIRM GLOOMY OUTLOOK FOR PSP.

(C) CUNHAL'S CURRENT TACTIC IS TO STAY AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THE AFM WHILE CONTINUALLY EDGING THEM IN HIS DIRECTION. HIS MARCH 12 CENTRAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT IS EXPLICIT ABOUT MAJOR COMMUNIST TASKS FOR THE NEXT STAGE: PURGE OF STATE ADMINISTRATION, CIVILIAN AND MILITARY; AND "REORGANIZATION" OF PARAMILITARY FORCES. AT THE SAME TIME, CUNHAL HAS TO BE CONCERNED THAT AFM RADICALS COULD DECIDE THEY NO LONGER NEED SUPPORT PCP HAS PROVIDED. HE MUST ALSO CONTINUE TO WORRY ABOUT SPLINTER GROUPS TO HIS LEFT.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LISBON 01398 131928Z

4. IF THIS ANALYSIS HAS VALIDITY, THEN ABORTIVE COUP OF MARCH 11 HAS SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED THE LIKELIHOOD THAT PORTUGAL IS MOVING TOWARDS OVERT MILITARY RULE. SUCH RULE WILL PROBABLY BE BASED ON POPULIST AND NATIONALIST POLICIES WITH HEAVY PRO-COMMUNIST OVERTONES. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT IS LIKELY TO BE SOUGHT IN THE "THIRD WORLD" AND NATO TIES, AT MINIMUM, DE-EMPHASIZED.

5. I REALIZE THIS IS A BLEAK SCENARIO. AT THE SAME TIME, I DO NOT BELIEVE THE SITUATION IS IRRETRIEVABLE. POSITIVE FACTORS ARE FEW, BUT SHOULD NOT BE TOTALLY DISCOUNTED: WITH SPINOLA'S DEPARTURE, PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES PROBABLY WILL LOSE HIS PRINCIPAL RIVAL FOR LEADERSHIP OF CENTER FORCES WITHIN PORTUGUESE MILITARY, GRAVELY WEAKENED AS THESE FORCES MAY BE. COSTA GOMES IS NO CHARGER, BUT HE IS A SURE-FOOTED, RESPECTED LEADER WHO WILL COUNSEL MODERATION. HE MAY BE ABLE TO START BACK ON THE LONG UPHILL CLIMB, DESPITE HEAVY ODDS AGAINST HIM.

6. I BELIEVE U.S. POLICY AT THE PRESENT JUNCTURE SHOULD CENTER ON DOING ALL WE CAN TO LIMIT THE INEVITABLE LEFTWARD SHIFT. THIS WILL BE A DIFFICULT AND GRADUAL PROCESS. WE HAVE LOST A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CREDIBILITY BY WARNINGS OF A COMMUNIST-LED COUP WHEN, IN FACT, THE COUP EMANATED FROM THE FAR RIGHT. CHARGES OF USG COMPLICITY ARE WIDELY BELIEVED.

7. NONETHELESS, WE HAVE MEANS AT OUR DISPOSAL. THERE IS RESPECT AND RESIDUAL GOOD WILL FOR USG IN MANY CIRCLES, ALTHOUGH THEIR VOICES HAVE BEEN MUTED. THE POPULATION IS STILL CONSERVATIVE AND THE BULK OF MILITARY OFFICERS HAVE STILL NOT BEEN RADICALIZED. DEPARTMENT'S REAFFIRMATION OF CONTINUANCE OF OUR AID PROGRAM IS MOST HELPFUL, SINCE THIS HAS BEEN OUR MOST USEFUL TOOL TO DATE. WE WILL NEED ALL THE LEVERS WE CAN PUT OUR HANDS ON IN THE WEEKS AND MONTHS AHEAD.
CARLUCCI

NOTE BY OC/T: EXDIS CAPTION ADDED PER S/S-O, MR. JOHNSON
3/13/75.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, ARMED FORCES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LISBON01398
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750088-0770
From: LISBON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750355/aaaabwzx.tel
Line Count: 144
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 LISBON 1333
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 MAY 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <20 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PORTUGUESE COUP: ASSESSMENT AND IMPLICATIONS
TAGS: MILI, PINT, PO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006